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The Naval Aviation Safety Review



From the Editor



He was the most annoying human on earth. Unfortunately, I not only worked with him, I also flew with him. No matter what I said he said the opposite. No matter what I did he did it different. Strangely, I didn't really dislike the guy, I just couldn't stand him for longer than fifteen minutes. Our missions became three hour flights with Annoyingman.

Although he was the most junior driver in the squadron, he had a lot of private pilot time that made him quite confident in his abilities. Even though a Skywarrior and a Stearman don't have much in common, his solo time made it tough to teach him crew concept. He felt that navs didn't have much to add to flying. To him navs were mobile voice-activated chart-holders.

We had a couple of minor emergencies while flying together, and though we survived them we didn't handle them very well. To him discourse was a lost art. Contradiction was his credo.

I couldn't even get him to do the schedule or some other mundane assignment (Even the simplest request became an Arab-Israeli Sum-

mit). Usually, I resorted to emphatically using the advertising phrase "just do it." That didn't work in the air. We needed to communicate. I usually ended up telling him to shut up and that we would discuss it on deck. As hard as it is to admit, he wasn't always wrong; he was just always excruciatingly abrasive.

According to Safety Center statistics, during the last ten years poor crew coordination caused 132 class A accidents. As one of the skills we can practice easily on every flight, crew coordination should save aircraft and people, not destroy and kill them. Aircrews don't have to be friends but they must be a team of professionals.

I'm not sure what I could have done to make us a better crew. I tried logic, fear, anger, and even just ignoring him. Nothing worked. I finally calmed myself during long missions by dreaming of diabolical deeds to rid myself of him. An old platitude from the training command says "Fly as if everyone else is trying to kill you." He never realized how close I came to proving it.



Lt. Steve Halsted
Approach Editor

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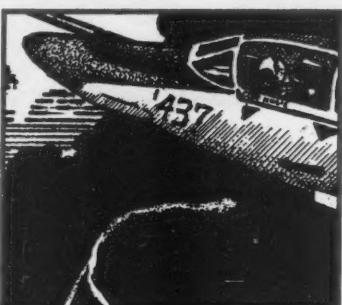
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On the cover: A UH-1N Huey of VXE-6 in Antarctica. PH2 Lance Kirk

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But We Did All That Planning



By Lt. Brian Hinkley

It was a normal, 90-degree, clear-and-a-million March day on Gonzo Station in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The otherwise standard Case I launch was complicated by only one minor detail: we were the designated strike lead for a 15-plane WASEX against a foreign aircraft carrier.

The chance to participate in this event, let alone actually lead it, only comes along once in a great many cruises. We (and several other aircrew) had planned and prepared for two complete days. We had lost many hours of sleep during the preceding two nights, perfecting the precise time-line, the rendezvous, the tanking plan and fuel figures. We had double-checked the navigation and the comm plan, and produced a flawless strike flyer to summarize it all. We couldn't go down on deck; we simply could not miss out on this flight, not after

we had worked so hard. This line of thinking pushed us to take a questionable aircraft.

We manned up. A week ago, the same aircraft had its rudder pack replaced and had subsequently checked good on an FCF. We were 10-15 minutes early strapping in because this was such a important flight. The first question arose when the pilot thought the rudder pedals were abnormally "sticky" but still fully functional. We had a manned spare waiting on the stern to take our place if, by chance, we went down, but they hadn't done all that planning! We decided to press on with the routine checks.

All went well until we dirtied up and the pilot looked at the IPI. The slats were indicating up but they looked down. Aircraft down? Launch the spare? What about all that planning? The yellow shirt taxied us to cat 4, and before we knew it, we were in the shuttle.

One of the aircrew mentioned that the slats had been indicating incorrectly for a few flights, a repeat gripe, but that they had actually worked OK. All other checks were good. We decided the slat malfunction was just a false indication and that it would probably indicate correctly after the shot. We went into tension, last chance to abort the launch. Should we suspend?

It was a good stroke. The gear came up. At 185 KIAS, the pilot raised the flap lever. Flaps up, slats up...oops, not quite. The slats were stuck down. We climbed to 5,000 feet, assumed a safe airspeed of 250 KIAS, and a corresponding AOA. We isolated and selected STAB AUG.

The pilot quickly computed an estimated fuel figure for our recovery time. With our fuel flow at 6,000-8,000 pounds per hours, we'd still have 7.5 at the end of our 1+45 cycle. That made us a little more comfortable. (Charlie was 4.5.)

Next problem: our particular malfunction was *not* in the PCL. There were emergency procedures for flaps and slats failing to retract and being barber-poled, but not for just the slats failing to retract.

We were now 10 minutes into our launch and had to do some quick inflight troubleshooting to solve our dilemma.

A quick check of the circuit-breakers ensured they were all in. Should we raise the slats electrically? If we were able to raise them, would they lower again? Would we face a no-slat

landing? The flaps worked OK...so far.

Could we wind up putting ourselves in a no-flap-no-slat condition? Would the carrier be able to recover us if we did?

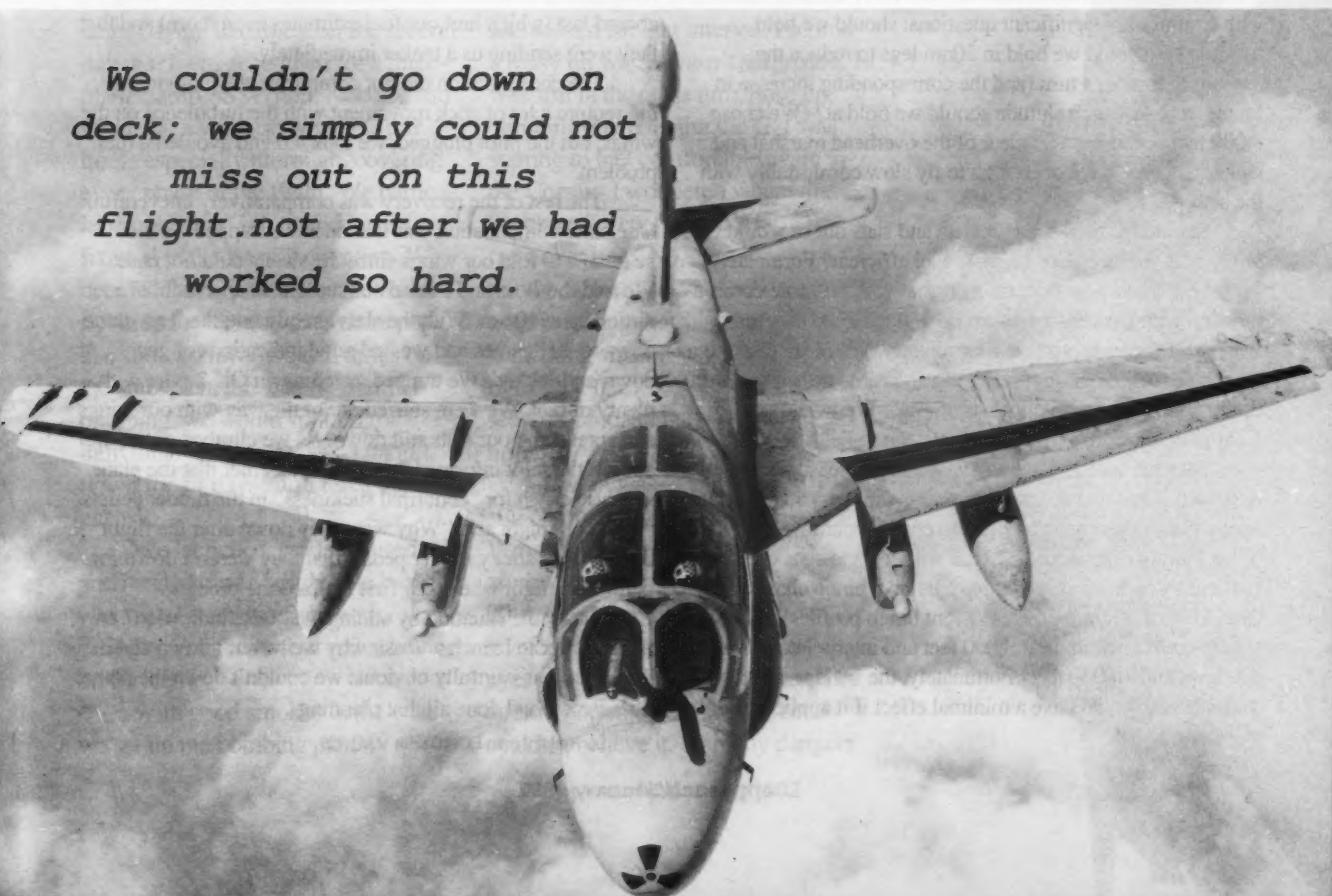
The pilot put the flap lever to 20. The flaps went to 20 degrees but the slats didn't move. When he returned the flap lever to the up position, the flaps came up and the IPI changed to correctly indicate that the slats were out, but the flaps were down.

We next tried the emergency flap switch. As our NATOPS recommends, switch to down then to up, then off. The flaps worked fine but the slats still didn't move. We couldn't believe our bad luck. We were now 15 to 20 minutes into our event with the rest of the strike ready to push from the rendezvous. Because we had been one of the last aircraft to launch, not only had we now missed the opportunity to have our spare launch, but it was too late for us to trap on the subsequent recovery.

We got on the radios and assigned the strike lead to another player. We finally admitted to ourselves that we couldn't lead the strike even after all our planning. We contacted our rep in the tower and told him about our situation.

His first question was, "Why didn't you trap with the last recovery?" We replied that we were still troubleshooting until it was too late, which was, in fact, true. But we must

We couldn't go down on deck; we simply could not miss out on this flight. not after we had worked so hard.





admit we probably tried a little too hard (for a little too long) to fix an aircraft that we normally would have recovered at the earliest opportunity. But we couldn't miss our chance to lead the strike. What about all that planning?

Now that we had missed the recovery, we were faced with a number of significant questions: should we hold overhead or should we hold in 20nm legs to reduce the amount of time in a turn (and the corresponding increase in fuel flow)? At which altitude should we hold at? (We chose 8,000 feet because it was clear of the overhead marshal and tanker patterns, but low enough to fly slow comfortably with the slats out.)

Should we hold with flaps up and slats out or would going to 20-degree flaps be more fuel efficient? Fortunately for us, our flaps were operating normally. After more communication with our rep, we lowered the flaps to 20 degrees, which did decrease our fuel flow slightly. We recalculated our estimated fuel at our recovery time and came up with a result 3,000 pounds less than our first estimate. We would be Charlie on the ball. We looked at our bingo field.

Masirah was 150 nm away. We did, at least, have the approach plates and divert cards so we were prepared in that sense. Next dilemma: which bingo charts would we use? What kind of drag would we face with just the slats out? That particular condition does not have its own bingo charts. Should we use climb-cruise-descent bingo profiles or should we fly constant altitude at 8,000 feet and interpolate between sea level and 10,000 feet? Fortunately, the wind was light and variable and would have a minimal effect if it applied at all.

After doing a number of quick bingo calculations and interpolations, it was obvious that if we could not land on the carrier, we'd have to hit a tanker on the way to the beach. What would tanking be like in this configuration? We soon found out. The carrier informed us that we would be taken aboard last (which hurt our fuel estimates even more) and that they were sending us a tanker immediately.

The configuration did not complicate the plugging. It did require a lot of stick movement with the turbulence on the wings, but the pilot plugged, we took 4.0 and avoided a fuel problem.

The rest of the recovery was comparatively uneventful. One other complication was that once we trapped we would be unable to fold our wings since the slats would not raise. We told the Boss and started our straight-in approach. We dirtied up at 10 nm. With the slats already out, the flaps came down to 30 degrees and we had good indications of gear down-and-locked. We trapped, catching an OK 2-wire with plenty of fuel. We were stuffed out of the way with our wings still spread and our slats still down. As we climbed out of the aircraft the pilot informed the flight deck chief that the plane was also down for "abnormal stickiness" in the rudder pedals.

You might ask, "Why were they down after the flight for the same sticky rudder pedals that they weren't down for before the flight when they first realized the problem?" Complicate the situation by adding the "false indication" on the IPI prior to launch and ask why we weren't down again. The answer is painfully obvious: we couldn't down the plane because we had done all that planning

Lt. Hinkley is an ECMO with VAQ-129.

The Amazing Shrinking Aviator

By Lt. Kevin Keutmann

Sporadic flight operations and inattention in the air can be a deadly combination. A recent experience of mine in the Med is a perfect example. It proved to me that the little things can sneak up and bite you.

In the middle of the cruise, we had just finished 10 days on the beaches of Palma De Mallorca. After a day of R & R for the air wing, we began flying in earnest on the second day out. I was scheduled for a three-plane bomb-SSSC hop. Nobody had flown for a while so we made our briefs especially thorough, covering every phase of the flight. We particular emphasized safety and target fixation in the bombing pattern. We decided that because of poor visibility in haze, we would do three pop-ups and two laydown deliveries on the smokes in the water. After the bombing, we would split up for individual sector searches. I hadn't flown for 14 days and I felt a little uneasy.

We launched, rendezvoused and headed out to bomb. The haze was worse than expected with visibility at three or four miles below 8,000 feet.

With good smokes in the water, we set up the bombing pattern.

Keeping sight of our intervals was difficult at best. We used the radios a lot. As expected, the pop-ups felt very mechanical; nothing seemed to come naturally. On my run, I started too early and on the next, too late. On the third delivery, I drove in too close before starting my popup. I had to push the nose down to get a good hit on the target. No problem – a little zero G never hurt anyone. Of course, my kneeboard and checklist flew off the glareshield and ended up floating somewhere behind me.

Off target, I went into the turn and looked for that interval. I scored a lousy hit which wasn't surprising. I was still in the cross turn, nose up, climbing and relaxing the G. I was starting to feel comfortable again in the Corsair. I wondered where that kneeboard went. It should be right over here. No, maybe farther back. I got the feeling that something wasn't right. Just five seconds of inattention.

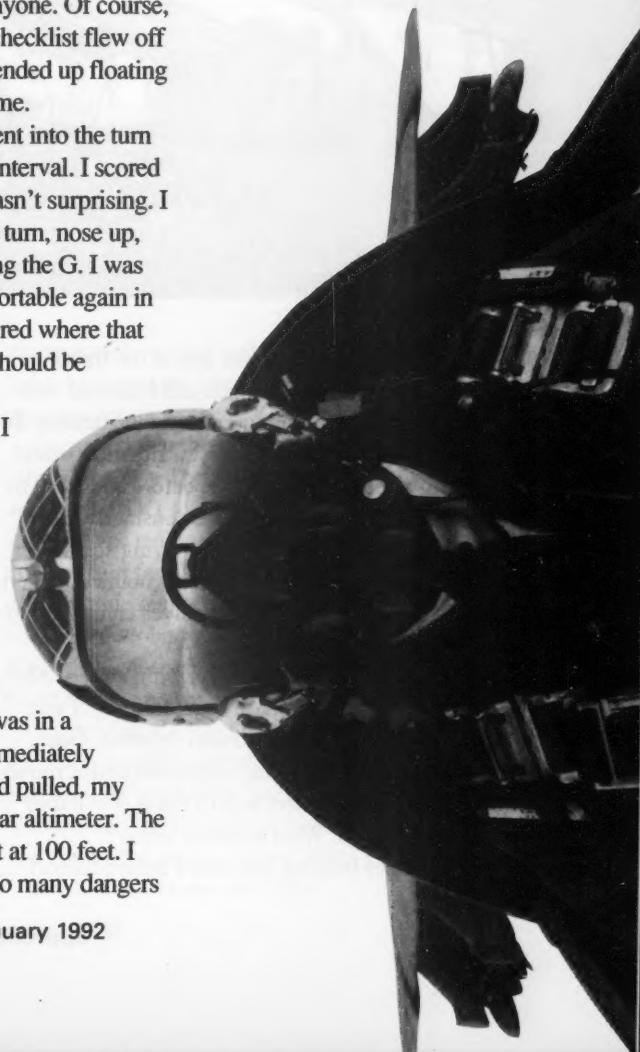
The jet was still climbing. Wrong! As I looked around, the aircraft was in a 20-degree dive. I immediately leveled the wings and pulled, my eyes glued to the radar altimeter. The aircraft bottomed out at 100 feet. I couldn't believe it. So many dangers

and I almost died looking for my kneeboard. I felt like the amazing shrinking aviator, getting small in the cockpit.

This incident might seem a little mundane, but the result could have been spectacular. It was completely predictable. You can't take a vacation from flying for two weeks and expect to have the same feel for the aircraft when you return. I should have been more alert and placed more emphasis on flying the basics.

Oh, yeah, I shouldn't have put anything on the glareshield, either. ◀

Lt. Keutmann is an instructor with VFA-106.



A Healthy Change in Attitude

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By Lt. Glenn Foltz



I still remember what it was like in the training command. I memorized and followed procedures and rules while often not quite understanding the reasoning behind them. Occasionally, a situation would arise that hadn't been outlined to me before and I had to think for myself. To aviators who are constantly under scrutiny or in the stressful situation of flying solo in a high-performance aircraft with not many hours of experience behind them, thinking for themselves can be a terrifying concept.

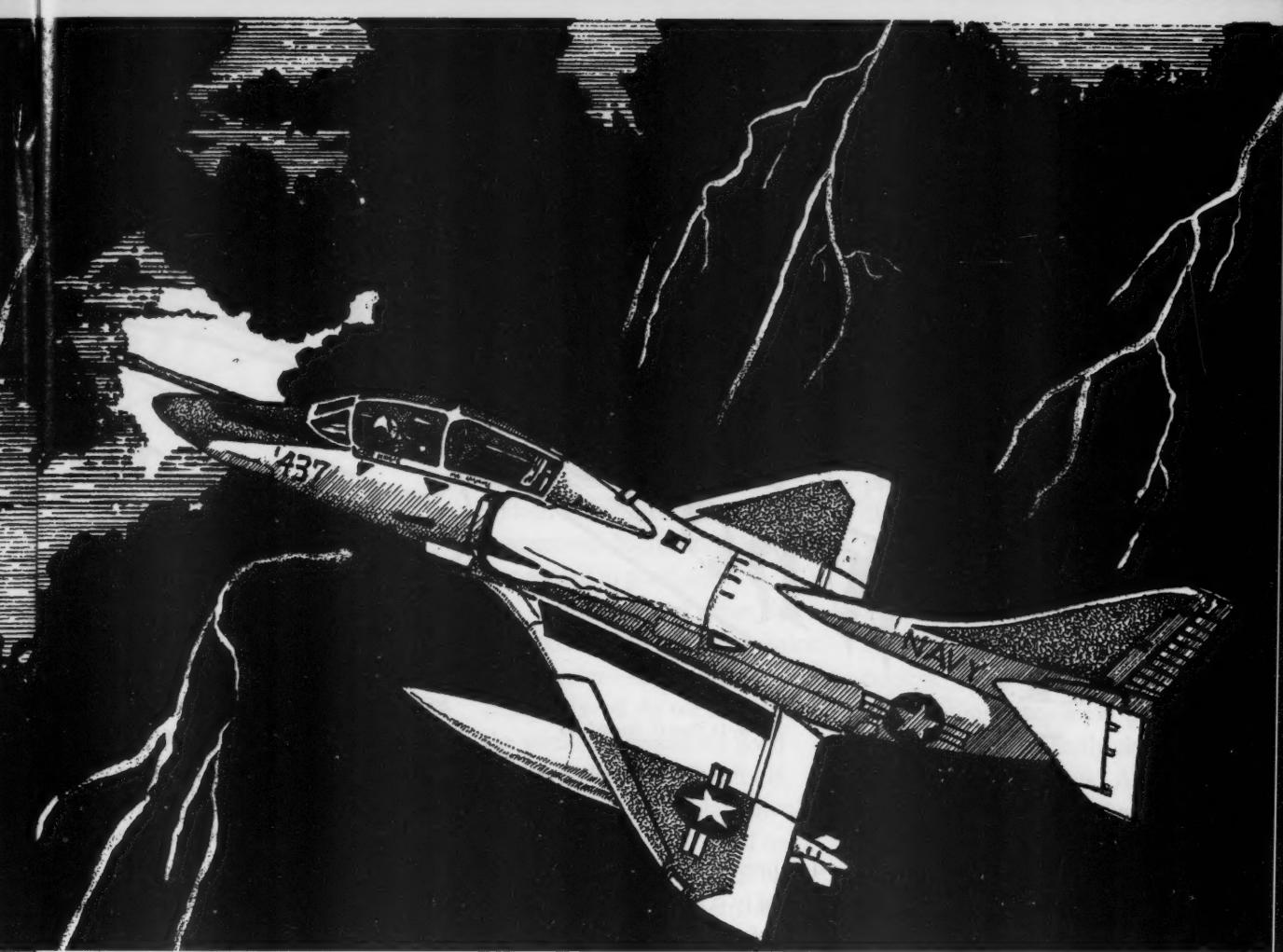
In April 1987, I was flying TA-4Js with VT-7 at Meridian during the advanced phase of jet training. I was nearing the end of a long and arduous syllabus. One evening, I was scheduled for my night instrument round-robin solo, the last instrument hop of the A-4 syllabus and a solo hop besides. What could be easier?

I got my weather briefing two hours before takeoff

and re-read it on the way back to the hangar after filing my flight plan. Mostly clear skies with scattered thunderstorms between homebase and Gulfport, where I was doing my practice approach. At Meridian, the forecasters always predicted scattered thunderstorms so I wasn't extremely concerned. After a brief with the SDO, I walked to my aircraft and noticed the stars and moon shining brightly above. What a beautiful night for a solo.

After an uneventful start-up and launch, center suddenly started mentioning heavy thunderstorms ahead and in the vicinity of Gulfport. I called metro at Gulfport and they reported partly cloudy. No problem.

I shot the high TACAN and began my missed-approach procedures. Shortly after receiving my clearance back to homebase, the controller switched me back to center frequency. No one answered. I switched back to departure. Still no response. I tried the flight service sta-



tion with no luck. OK, I must be NORDO. That was no problem. I had my clearance back to homebase and my NORDO procedures down cold. I felt the knot in the pit of my stomach tighten as I suddenly noticed my TACAN needle spinning.

Looking directly ahead, I could see lightning and dark clouds blocking out the moon. I began squawking 7700/7600 and kept troubleshooting my radio and TACAN.

As I leveled off at my assigned altitude of 21,000, I realized I was either going to have to turn or drive straight through a thunderstorm.

I also suddenly realized I had no idea what the rules permitted me to do. I decided to take a 40-degree cut to the left and hope center would clear out anything in front of me. After navigating around three large cells, I saw that my TACAN had locked up on homebase and that I could resume my normal NORDO procedures. I started

my approach on time and was relieved to see a green light shining at me from the tower on final. There was a message for me at the SDO's desk to call ATC.

I assumed that they had given me a violation for flying off the airways. The controller told me that they picked up my NORDO squawk almost immediately and assumed I was making course deviations for weather. I thanked him for clearing out traffic in front of me and for the first time realized that those guys are there to help you, not to violate you when you break the rules. The SDO gave me an above average in headwork and sent me home to have a beer and reflect on the evening.

My confidence level in Navy aircraft decreased. Overall, a very healthy attitude change. I've had several minor emergencies since then. Each one reminds me of that first one and the realization that I'm the one in charge and I make the decisions that affect my airplane. ◀

Lt. Foltz is an F-14 pilot with VF-213.

I reassured him we didn't have
"troubleshooting tunnel vision"

He Who is Patient
Often

By Lt. Paul D. Shankland

We were at our typical tempo for Provide Comfort operations in the eastern Med. A new at-sea period required me, the plane commander, to get a trap-cat-trap to go for currency that night. Rough deal, this daytime trap-cat-trap arrangement.

With the double-cycle sortie concluded, I jumped into the Case I Pattern, hawking the deck at Angels 1.2 for my first pass. My Hummer gave me every reason to believe all systems were working

4.0. Into the break I went for the first of two looks at the ball.

My first trap went by smoothly and we taxied up to catapult 1. The bird still looked great as we powered up in tension on the cat. Keeping one eye on the Tomcats on our nose in the carrier break, I saluted and we zipped down the rail. Our plan was to depart the pattern and reenter at the top of the marshal stack, so that we'd be the last plane on deck.

On the climbout something didn't feel right. My starboard engine hesitated slightly, getting more pronounced as I leveled off and retarded power to cruise. I gave the Tomcats right over me

extra room as they broke, and tried to get a quick idea of my predicament. The mission commander, our latest cat II addition to the squadron, was naturally concerned about the horsepower discussion going on up front while we were trying to clear Case I traffic. We were, indeed, aviating, though the mission commander unwittingly had underscored the desire for crew coordination. I reassured him we didn't have "troubleshooting tunnel vision", and we two pilots didn't plan on going for a swim.

My copilot broke out the NATOPS Manual, and clearing traffic, we climbed to work through the procedures.

No luck! The procedures for engine fluctuations didn't work. The variations in thrust and prop noise were becoming obvious. This was no gauge problem. Not an offspeed, pitchlock, or decouple, either. The problem

Shouldn't Be

smelled of fuel-control problems (that's a plug to know your systems). I called the Boss to ask for the squadron rep and tell him we needed to recover ASAP.

I chatted with my tower rep and our Hummer LSO, but that didn't turn on any light bulbs. Nor did it ease my growing concern that this would be a challenging ride down to my second trap. The Boss was busy with a crowded low-vis bolter pattern so my calls for an immediate straight-in got a "Roger" and nothing else.

The Boss had other problems. Another quick query got another "Roger." One last review of the NATOPS while waiting aft of the ship for a straight-in left me with one thought: was I being put off? With the bingo option nonexistent, the this-is-stupid rule was becoming quite evident. A grudging agreement from my mission commander didn't leave any room for doubt. We turned inbound with a leave-no-questions call to tower from my copilot that we were coming in *now*.

Because of the unpredictable

horsepower lag I set the power lever and left it. The pass was indeed a handful because of the horsepower fluctuations, but we got aboard in good order.

I thank my lucky stars that my conscience—and my mission commander—nagged me about being delayed. As we taxied out of the wires, my remaining good engine violently FODed itself, requiring immediate shutdown.

Looking back, if I had been delayed any longer, I could have been looking at a dual-engine failure and a flight terminating a wee bit short of mother. Delaying

a recovery when you have engine problems is obviously not good. But if you have an emergency in your cockpit, don't expect the busy outside world to rush to assist in every case. Control your situation outside as well as inside the cockpit.

All diplomacy aside, make your intentions perfectly clear. Don't be pushed around. Among the lessons revisited on that flight, I was especially glad we didn't let the little voice whispering, "This is stupid!" go unheeded. Patience is not a step in any aviation emergency I know of.

Lt. Shankland is an E-2C pilot with VAW-122.

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Peter Morsky





Ready Room Cowboy Rodeo

By LCdr. Bruce Shell

10

Yes, it is time for your next safety standdown or training AOM. As the aviation safety officer you are trying to come up with something new and different. At a minimum you need to keep young, restless and over-the-hill aviators awake and attentive for an hour. Just what will you do?

I have a simple, sure-fire scheme that will keep everyone awake and will give your squadron expertise in emergency situations. You won't need a simulator. My plan builds everyone's emergency awareness, ensuring that aircrews will be able to handle complex multiple emergencies. I call it Emergency Situation Scenario Training.

First, pick an aircraft system that has been involved in past mishaps, such as the ECS or hydraulic system of the F-14 Tomcat. Second, develop a logical scenario based on existing mishaps. If your files are like mine, I save all of the mishaps dealing with the Tomcat for training purposes. If you don't have an extensive file, the FRS,

the wing, or ship's safety officer should have enough historical mishap data for you.

Third, alert all of the aircrew which system will be covered for the safety standdown or AOM. Usually a week's notice will allow everyone to dig into the big blue sleeping pill to fortify their dormant brain cells. Fourth, have everyone bring their PCLs to the training event.

The day's training sequence should follow this lineup. After a detailed brief of the aircraft system, give descriptions of historical mishaps involving the system. Pick a crew to act as the "mishap aircrew," and one aviator to act as the "towerflower" or SDO. Have them come to the front of the ready room and be seated.

Yes, I know that some of you might say that the crew will be on the "hot seat" and it will be unfair to let the XO or CO see their ineptitude. I suggest that you pick knowledgeable, older aircrews to start and involve all of the aircrew over the period of a year.

Begin the scenario and introduce failing systems and warning and caution lights. Let the aircrew handle the emergency situations as they would in the aircraft. The tower rep is there if the aircrew feel that they need to alert someone of the emergency situation or that they may need an emergency pull forward.

Stop the scenario at key points and allow the audience to recommend what the aircrew should have looked at or what they should have done in that situation. As the moderator, you will have to hold the interruptions to a minimum to make the scenario flow.

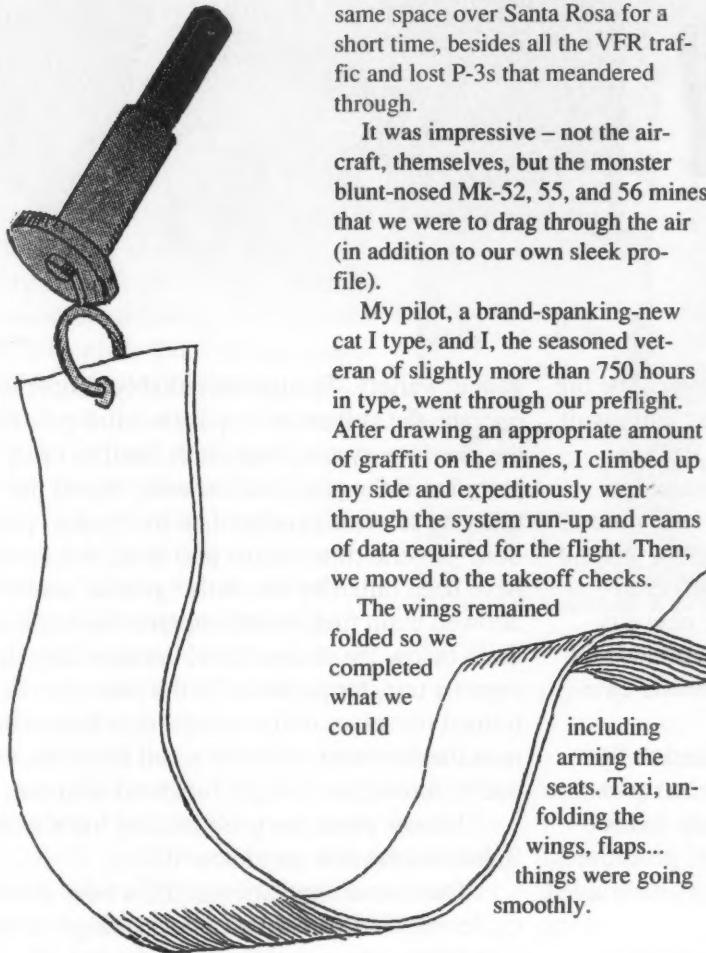
Be sure that no one violates squadron SOP and that if there are any questions about correct procedures, you or the SME have the answers.

By incorporating this type of training, we will build a cadre of squadron aviators who can handle emergencies on the ground before they experience them for real in the air. ◀

LCdr. Shell flies F-14Bs with VF-24.

I Hate It When That Happens

By Lt. Mark Thomas



We manned up for an 1145 launch for an air wing MINEX. Ten Intruders, some Hoovers, and a Hummer all bent on occupying the same space over Santa Rosa for a short time, besides all the VFR traffic and lost P-3s that meandered through.

It was impressive – not the aircraft, themselves, but the monster blunt-nosed Mk-52, 55, and 56 mines that we were to drag through the air (in addition to our own sleek profile).

My pilot, a brand-spanking-new cat I type, and I, the seasoned veteran of slightly more than 750 hours in type, went through our preflight. After drawing an appropriate amount of graffiti on the mines, I climbed up my side and expeditiously went through the system run-up and reams of data required for the flight. Then, we moved to the takeoff checks.

The wings remained folded so we completed what we could

including arming the seats. Taxi, unfolding the wings, flaps... things were going smoothly.

But wait. The flaps were indicating up. We stopped short of the shuttle, much to the chagrin of the raving yellow shirt, and signalled for a troubleshooter. We wisely safed our seats, opened the canopy, and after a well-placed fist from the AE, we were fixed. A couple of test cycles later, we buttoned up and were ready to go.

What had I forgotten?

A heavy cat shot, two five-plane rendezvous, 20 aircraft in the area, 13 planes over the target, a couple near-misses and four bullseyes later, we returned to the ship.

As Dash 5, our choices were limited, similar to the choice of water temperature of a ship's shower: you take what comes. Having held at the IP for more than 40 minutes, we found ourselves on a bingo pass after two fouled-deck waveoffs, wishing we had raised the BS flag an hour ago.

Fortunately, an OK 3-wire, and we were safely back onboard. We parked and waited as the deck crew chained us. At this moment, I discovered that my seat was safed – and had been since launch!

It's funny now, but if I had needed to eject during the hop, I would have been disappointed, then mad, then...fish food.

Riding ejection seats instills a special confidence that lets us go to the limits. If we blow it, we know there's a good chance we'll survive. Without this comforting thought, it would take a crazier man than I to routinely go on the missions we do. This safety device, the ultimate veto when things go wrong on a flight, deserves more credit and more attention than I gave it. I give it a lot more now. ▶

Lt. Thomas is a BN with VA-155.

Old Guy Meets New Guy

By Lt. Paul C. Reising

12

Sixty-four days until it's over! The big fly-off, the celebrations, the wives and kids await our return. In the meanwhile, there's Pattaya Beach and Hong Kong in our near future. In walks the new guy. He arrives in our ready room, crumpled check-in sheet in hand, bright-eyed and ready for action. Though matured and experienced from his previous VC tour, the new guy nevertheless shows an open-minded attitude and healthy respect for the new and unfamiliar environment of air-wing cyclic ops.

As an experienced BN, I get picked to fly with him, and I do my best to bring him up to speed. Together, we talk about briefing and rebriefing the details of air wing tactical procedures as well as the particulars of our composite-winged SWIP Intruders.

One of the many improvements of our SWIPs is the integrated, digital fuel-quantity indicator, a major advance over the old "steam



Peter Mersky

gauge" variety. Though remarkably simple to operate, the system isn't quite as idiot-proof as the previous system, and lends itself to misinterpretation if the pilot inadvertently leaves the quantity selector in other than the "main" position. Several times in the past year, A-6 crews have been bitten by this little "gotcha" and have allowed main fuel, which supplies the engines, to drain below the desired level because they didn't detect a transfer problem. In the past year we had trained ourselves to pay attention to the permanent thermometer-style main cell read-out, and not be fooled by a simple fuel total read-out.

I know about the problem, my buddies know it, but did the new guy know it?

Our second hop arrives. It's a busy double-cycle with lots of practice attacks, target acquisition work and tactical flying in general. The XO will lead our two-plane section low-level over Saudi Arabia.

Off the cat we go, up to angels nine and into the mission tanker. The XO is in and out of the basket first. We're in on the second stab. The fuel ready switch is in "flight", the wings are depressurized. Good flow from the tanker. Tanking complete.

Soon we're into the problem descending, combat checklists, a practice attack, radar target acquisition at the coast-in point. A tac-turn right and we press on, over the scorched and desolate central Saudi desert. Keeping lead in sight is difficult. The haze is unbelievable.

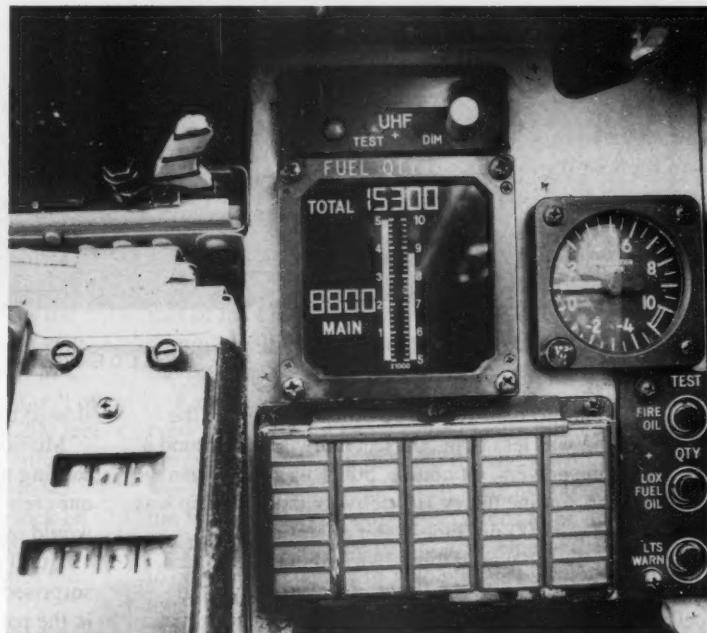
Twenty minutes later we're climbing off target. The digital readout assured us that we were right on our fuel ladder. But where was the fuel? The horrified new guy had the answer. Glancing down at the fuel panel, he saw the fuel-read switch still in flight from the earlier tanking, and the quantity selector on "wings". With no pressurization, the wing fuel indicator stayed still, while the fuselage gauge had dribbled down to a mere 1,250 pounds! A second later, we restored transfer and all was well again.

How had we goofed? As far as the fuel ready switch is concerned, that's a simple breakdown of crew coordination which we can remedy easily. The misinterpretation of the fuel quantity is just that and much more. It represented my failure to not only educate the new guy on the idiosyncrasies of the system, but to back him up every step of the way with fuel management. This reminder was a painful lesson to everyone on the importance of assuming nothing and anticipating everything when flying with a new crew member.

In the endless quest to make an idiot-proof system, the aircraft manufacturer has thoughtfully included a low-fuel warning system which, in the SWIP aircraft, is illuminated when the aft cell

quantity reaches a minimum of 1,440 pounds. This backup system had obviously failed us, though it's foolish to count on this redundant system, anyway. The need to gripe this system constituted an admission of guilt, and I was most impressed with the new guy's calm and independent agreement to do so.

Postflight troubleshooting revealed that the low-fuel light would have come on at 1,100 pounds, alerting us to our problem in time to prevent disaster.



Several times in the past year, A-6 crews have been bitten by this little "gotcha."

As the new guy and I painfully briefed the squadron the next day, if either of us fly Intruders for the rest of this century, and if our sons fly them for the 20 years to follow (a likely prospect), none of us will ever make that mistake again.

What other mistakes are out there ready to happen? That's a question I'll now carry to every brief. ◀

Lt. Reising is a BN with VA-165.

approach/January 1992



14

Photos by PH3 Tracy Lee Didas

By Lt. D.E. Braswell

It was hard to believe that 50 miles from home the ceiling was less than 500 feet and vis was around a mile in rain showers. Of course, 500/1 was more than we needed for a routine heavy HC delivery, and the ship was well within our 200-nm blue-water operating radius. Only a real dweeb would think twice about a little rain.

Twenty minutes into the flight, we hit the reported ceiling, but at a steady 150 KIAS, we would easily make lunch back at the Rota O Club. Ten minutes later and sweet lock. The ship was 210 degrees at 65 DME, right where they said she'd be.

My H2P dialed in control and checked in with the basic information. The ship replied with the usual and a ceiling of 300 feet and vis down to a half mile in rain showers. No sweat, yet! We were still in the ball park to make lunch before our second hit in the late p.m.

Five minutes after our check-in I requested "cherubs 3" and slowed to 120 KIAS. Five more minutes and we were down to 90 with the hair on the back of our necks starting to tingle. With the wipers at top speed, forward vis was still respectable, but the rain showers were no longer friendly and a 300-foot ceiling was beginning to look like a pipe dream. I called for "cherubs 2" and

slowed to 70 knots indicated.

Mission ready! You call, we haul! Our motto was starting to sound more like a curse than a battle cry. But our crew was a fearless bunch, and as long as the ship would take us, we'd go for it.

At 10 miles we switched to tower, and were pleasantly surprised to discover many of our helo brethren were still in the pattern. Very welcome news indeed. After all, if they were still flying, how bad could it be? Tower told us to expect a green deck, spot 5, and to call a "see me", or five miles. Oh yeah, like I really expected to see anything at five miles.

We called "five miles" and the ship told us to check our gear, call the seat, and that we were "charlie, spot five."

Two DME and we picked up our first traffic, another CH-53E but with a green paint scheme. The ship told him to take separation off us and remain in port delta. Winds were 50 to starboard, 35 knots, gusting to 45. Pitch-and-roll wasn't pretty, but still in the window. I was really glad to be in the right seat for this one.

At half a mile, 200 feet and 60 knots, I saw the ship. The deck looked clean so I continued my approach.

Crossing the edge of the deck, I started to realize how bad the situation was. The ship was tossing like a cork and massive sheets of rain made things hard to see. Luckily, just as I was about to wave off, the LSE reappeared and told me to land.

My crewmen called feet dry and I started for the deck. To my chagrin, the ship also came up toward our helo. There was a resounding thump as we were not so gingerly made one.

As the chains went on, I breathed a short sigh of relief until I remembered that we weren't staying. Then I heard my traffic call "short final." I asked my crewmen if they saw our compadre. At first they did, then they didn't, then they did, then they...

"I'm waving off!" yelled the second helo pilot. I could hear the expletives even though the radio was silent.

Two more tries and our fellow Echo drivers were on deck wishing they were in the Royal Navy so it could be "Foster's Time."

My copilot and I were already discussing what we thought our detachment OINC would say when we told him to forget about a second hit. There was just no way he would believe it was this bad when it looked so good on the beach. That was OK though. I always wanted one of those "7-11" smocks. We were adamant that, unless the ship reported some miracle weather change for the better, once we got back to the beach there was no way we would do this again for a routine delivery of P-M-C.

Getting off the deck was most exciting. A firm pull of the collective, a bit of left cyclic and we were at 200 feet in a heartbeat! After creeping at 60 knots for 40 minutes, we managed to climb to cherubs 3 and speed up to 90 KIAS. Thirty more minutes and we had a sweet lock on home plate. Everything was hunky-dory, and the cockpit chatter turned to what we would do with the rest of the day off.

Back on the beach we explained our definition of a good time to the OINC, but he was less than convinced.

The overhead

wasn't for a few

more hours, so he wasn't real keen on throwing in the towel this soon. Of course, we agreed, so we had lunch.

Thirty minutes before launch we were desperately seeking insight from the weather guessers. But, as was par for this course, there was none to be had. Our

OINC was busy in ops attempting to contact the ship. As fate would have it, he couldn't get through, and so he began his best "it'll be fine" speech. Being team players we hated to lose an overhead, but we also wanted to see another happy hour.

Time crept on and so did his speech.

"Well," we finally said, "we guess it wasn't really that bad. What's the harm in at least giving it another shot? If things look the same we'll turn around." The rationalization was reaching a fevered pitch.

"Excuse me, are you the 53 crew?" asked one of the troops.

"Why, yes," we said.

"The ship just called. They secured flight ops for the day, something about the weather."

All the rationalization in the world won't change the weather. Letting yourself get caught in the "we're already here so let's do it" trap can be disastrous. Trust your judgement. If you know something's bad, then it probably is.

Don't get caught in the "too mission oriented" mindset. We've all heard it before: Peacetime, zero operational necessity, and somebody pushed too hard. At the start of this mission, I was very confident in my crew's ability to make the overhead. I wasn't very concerned about the weather. As a result, my orientation and that of my crew fixed on making the overhead, and we weren't really listening to the little voices telling us that the weather was unsatisfactory.

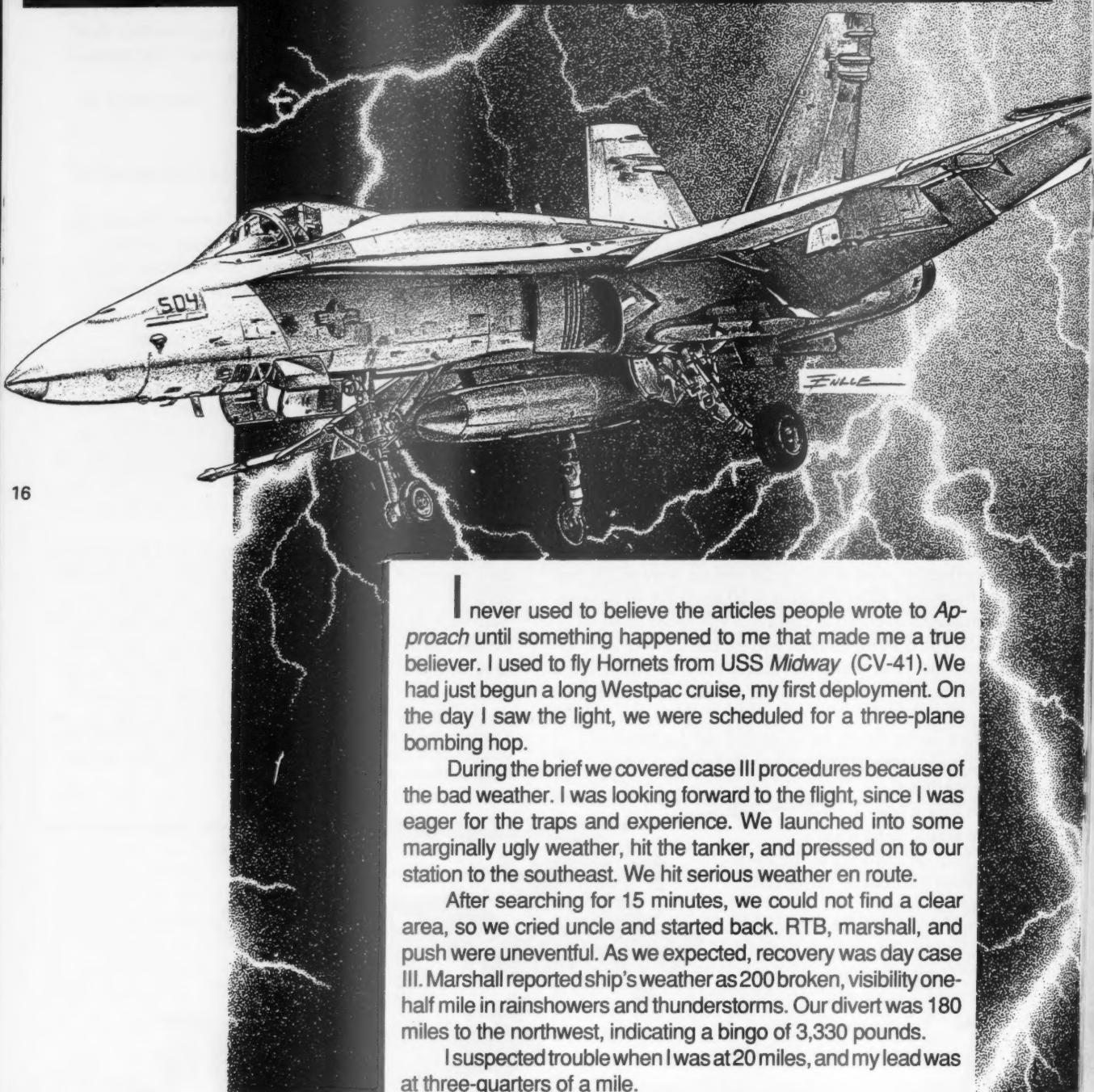
Finally, always consider the entire crew. I thought my crew would let me know if they really felt uncomfortable during a mission, but they hardly said a word until we were back on the beach. When there are other lives on the line, an aircraft commander needs to be doubly sure he always chooses the best course. One of the best ways to check these decisions is to always keep everybody in touch with the big picture, no matter what's going on. ▶

Lt. Braswell is the Air Ops/Safety Officer in USS *LaSalle* (AGF-3). Previously, he flew CH-53Es with HC-4 and was the CH-53E Fleet NATOPS Evaluator.



Now I Believe

By Lt. C.O. Okuingtons



16

I never used to believe the articles people wrote to *Approach* until something happened to me that made me a true believer. I used to fly Hornets from USS *Midway* (CV-41). We had just begun a long Westpac cruise, my first deployment. On the day I saw the light, we were scheduled for a three-plane bombing hop.

During the brief we covered case III procedures because of the bad weather. I was looking forward to the flight, since I was eager for the traps and experience. We launched into some marginally ugly weather, hit the tanker, and pressed on to our station to the southeast. We hit serious weather en route.

After searching for 15 minutes, we could not find a clear area, so we cried uncle and started back. RTB, marshall, and push were uneventful. As we expected, recovery was day case III. Marshall reported ship's weather as 200 broken, visibility one-half mile in rainshowers and thunderstorms. Our divert was 180 miles to the northwest, indicating a bingo of 3,330 pounds.

I suspected trouble when I was at 20 miles, and my lead was at three-quarters of a mile.

"303, three-quarters of a mile, on and on, call the ball."

"Clara," lead replied.

"Paddies contact, you're a little left, glideslope's good."

After a short pause, paddles came up. "Call the ball."

"Clara," lead said again.

After a few very long seconds, I heard, "Ball", and he trapped. I figured I was about to have a rich learning experience, and I wasn't disappointed. My CILS glideslope was intermittent, and I reported this to CATCC.

"Roger, fly the mode three ASR, MDA is 600 feet." Paddles replied.

Paddies never saw me that high. He waved me off with 4,400 pounds of gas, and I entered the penalty box for another try. The next time, I was more inclined to keep my mouth shut about the ILS, and it matched up pretty well with self-contained numbers. But at one mile, I hadn't broken out, and I knew it would be close.

"313, three-quarters of a mile, slightly below and slightly right. Call the ball."

"Clara," I said.

The LSO called, "Wave off." I now had 3,900 pounds of gas.

"313, airborne."

"313, your signal is bingo," Paddles called. "Hook up, clean up, pigeons 317 for 174." As I accelerated for the climbout, I heard departure call, "99, check landing lights on." Had I missed that call?

I began to wonder when this "simulator session" would end. I accelerated to my climb airspeed and began my profile. After leveling off, I discussed the field with a squadronmate on our tactical frequency. He reminded me to turn on anti-skid for the rollout. I felt confident, because the climb had gone by the numbers, and I had started the profile 600 pounds fat on gas. But when I got to attitude, I checked the winds and found I had 50 knots in the face.

"OK," I thought, "no problem, I'm fat."

I began to close to within eight miles of traffic during my descent, so I took a small 30-degree cut away to avoid it. I continued down until I broke out at 2,000 feet, saw the field, and dirtied up. Because of the cut-away, my final leg was 10 miles long, far too long for a bingo profile. I landed with 1,400 pounds, 100 pounds below NATOPS reserve, after starting 600 pounds over bingo fuel.

Now I was impatient to stop, so I jumped on the brakes. I was accustomed to the sensitive braking one gets with antiskid secured, so the brakes were spongy with the anti-skid on. I wrongly interpreted this as a brake failure (since I had the pedals on the floor), and selected emergency brakes. Antiskid is automatically secured with the E-brake, and when I jumped on the binders a second time, I blew the port tire. The jet now decelerated

quite well. I had less than 100 knots on the jet, 6,000 feet of runway, and was low on gas. In my first good decision of the day, I kept the aircraft on deck.

The list of bad decisions is longer. I flew an ASR after reporting negative bullseye, even though it was intermittent. I could certainly have taken a strain, accepted the ILS information, and shot a self-contained CCA on the first pass. I learned later that I had, indeed, missed a "99, landing lights" call while I was flying the CV-1.

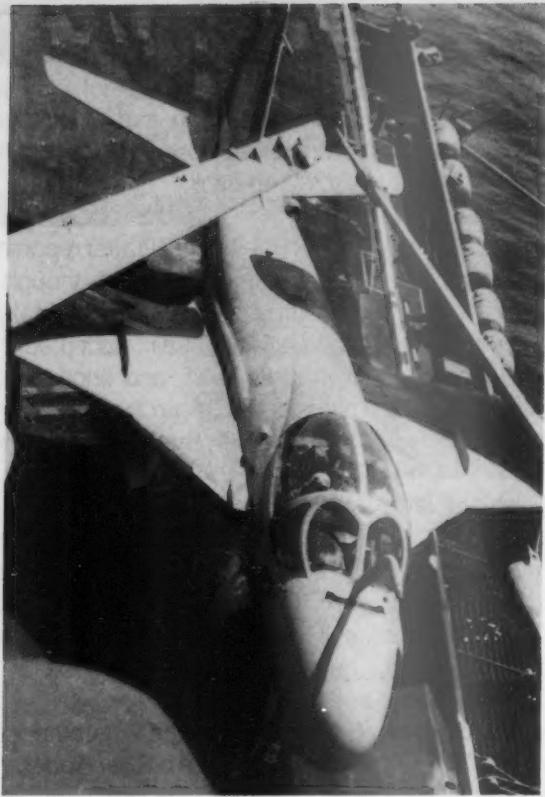
Always fly a self-contained CCA, and keep your ears perked up so you don't miss an important call, which in my case would have helped the LSOs see me on the second pass.

Don't let yourself get surprised by the difference between boat and field ops. On a flyoff, antiskid and braking action are mandatory briefing items, so they should be mandatory briefing items for bingos as well.

Bingo profiles begin during the weather brief when you cover such items as winds aloft. I was lucky enough to have departure on my side to call my bingo 600 pounds early, accounting for the headwind. NATOPS doesn't account for traffic, so tell tower or approach to clear your path if you have traffic. Every flight, no matter how unusual, ends with your engines shut down; don't stop thinking just because your tires are on deck.

Lt. Okuingtons flies F/A-18s with VFA-192.

Don't let yourself get surprised by the difference between boat and field ops.



18

I'm in Complete Control of

My Destiny

By Lt. Greg Goebel

"Remember, guys, people don't fly into the water on dark and stormy nights; it usually happens when the sun is shining and the seas are calm."

While manning a spare for a SSC-bomb sortie one clear, warm morning, I thought about our skipper's words. During many a safety standdown or AOM, he'd preach this gospel to his young, first-cruise aviators.

Just the thought of flying into the water is a great reality check, especially when you strap in for a good-deal hop feeling like you're bullet-proof.

We started up and after completing the checklist, I told myself that I would never fly into the water. I was in full control of my destiny at all times. I had a great attitude and an up jet, but luck wasn't with me today. The go aircraft launched. I was just another turning spare, which meant all I would do was taxi around the edge of the flight deck.

A yellow shirt approached and indicated

that he was going to respot us closer to the island. He broke us down and handed us off to a rookie director who was giving me a signal for a locked-brake turn from a stop. I started getting annoyed. This guy did not realize that I had to go almost to military to move a fully fueled Intruder around. That would be a debrief item.

"Boss, 501 needs to come up on the power."

"501, you're cleared."

With the aircraft slowly turning and the power at 90 percent, I suddenly noticed an awful lot of people watching. As we slowly made our way to the right, I thought we were close to hitting the scupper. No big deal. It was designed to stop us from going over the side if

I gave him the dumbfounded look I usually reserve for our XO.

the plane slid forward and hit it.

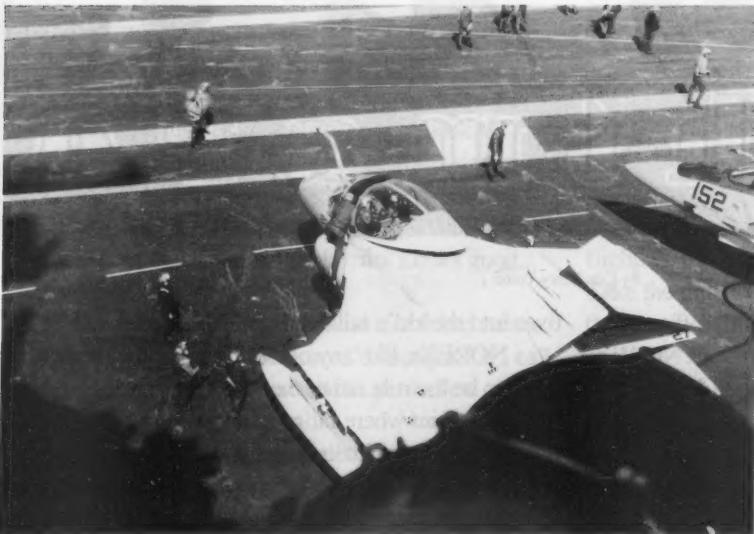
We were chocked and chained. After shutdown, our squadron maintenance chief met me as I came down my plane's ladder. He seemed a little upset. He asked if I realized how close the A-6 had come to taxiing over the edge and into the water. I gave him the dumbfounded look I usually reserve for our XO.

Then, I found out that the yellow shirt had taxied us within six inches of a bomb chute! Another six inches and we would have quickly become a two-man submarine! Now, I was upset. Why didn't someone stop the move?

I stormed into flight deck control to ask the handler. His only reply was that it had happened so fast that there was nothing his crew could do. I assured him, and myself, that this type of incident would never happen again.

I could not believe I had been taxiing around the flight deck without a care in the world, never once questioning the yellow shirt in front of me.

All aviators feel nervous walking around on the flight deck during flight operations. We instill in ourselves that "as long as I'm in the jet, I am safe and sound" feeling of security. Every time you're on the flight deck, keep your head moving. If there's a doubt, stop! Don't assume everyone on the outside is watching out for you. Remember, airplanes not only fly into the water on calm, sunny days, they can also taxi into it. ◀



Photos by John Williams

Lt. Goebel is an A-6E pilot with VA-95.

NOREX



By Cdr. Terry Toms

"The good news is that you're on the fly-off tomorrow. The *better* news is that you're playing in a NOREX so please swing by Fallon and drop a silver bullet."

How many times have you heard these words at the end of a long at-sea period? "Jeez," I thought, "I'm beat after four weeks of night EMCON recoveries and war-at-sea launches. But, I'll be home with my wife in 12 hours. Yeah!" Then I thought, "No rack time tonight since I gotta plan this hop. *But* drinks in front of the fireplace, soft music, yeah!"

Then, "I better not drop this thing in the wrong state. It's a COMPEX run. If I can just slip some seda-

tives into the kid's milk at dinner..."

NOREXs, like any other high-tempo operation, seem to be the rule rather than the exception on fly-off day. At a point where fatigue and get-home-it is are at their peaks, we typically throw a wild card into the last hand.

True to form, I planned and packed, arced and sparked right to man-up. Although another crew from our squadron was assigned the same mission and target, we had 30 minutes of target time, so we figured that there would not be a conflict because of our separate ingress routes.



I was pretty beat as my Intruder sailed down the catapult but, hey, who wasn't? Should be no big deal. As we ingressed to the target via our particular low-levels, the primary concern in our cockpit was whether we had enough fuel to press for home without stopping. I was wondering if I had enough dry firewood and scheming ways to get a four-year old to bed early.

As we approached the target area, we were on time and looking good but communications with the range were typically garbled. I hooked in from the west for my "really ready" (boy, was I) run. I made a mental note that we were following some A-7s as I set up for my 400-foot laydown. Out of habit, I called the north IP inbound, even though I wasn't getting many replies from the range. I programmed my descent to arrive at my release altitude no earlier than two miles prior to release.

At six miles, I made another inbound call and was cleared on to the range as the only aircraft. Suddenly, our aircraft buffeted and I had a momentary impression of something gray underneath me. Did we thump an A-7? No, they've already called clear! Oh, well, must be thermals. I should concentrate on the run. Looks good... pickle. Yo—good hit!

Off target, our fuel gauge showed us the bad news: we'd have to land for gas. "Let's see," I thought, "if I call home now, she can run him around the yard a few times... yeah, that's the ticket."

We landed at Fallon and proceeded to the transient line. As the ground crew refueled our aircraft, another A-6 taxied in. The second plane's crew approached us. In the bright Fallon sunshine, they appeared a bit pale. The pilot asked if I'd seen him on the run-in. I listened to their story and the hairs on the back of my neck began to stand up. It turned out that our buddies, in a similar mental and physical state, had ingressed from the east. Although

they couldn't maintain radio contact with the range and were never cleared in, they had heard my calls and assumed I was well ahead of them.

My IP report went unheard as they headed for the same point. They then received my six-mile call and glanced at their own range to target. As they started to wonder why their readout was *also* six miles, everything got dark. I thundered over their heads, barely clearing their vertical stabilizer, and went merrily on to glory.

This scenario easily could have resulted in no one making it home. I thought about some mistakes we had made in planning and execution. Our near-miss in the target area came from poor timing before we took off. On this day, we'd tasked ourselves to the limit and possibly beyond. No *Approach* article would be complete without some lessons learned, and on this hop there were plenty.

Two or more aircraft at a target need separation. Do a face-to-face brief and agree on hard target times for each aircraft and stick to your plan. At the same time, discuss altitudes and airspeeds for each aircraft!

The only mission of a fly-off should be to get you and your jet home safely. If you can't devote 100 percent of your attention to a difficult mission, you're an accident waiting to happen. Before flying into a pattern, bombing or landing, know where all the players are. If you can't sort it out, don't go in!

As carrier aviators, it's a common perception that we're being tasked to do too much on a particular mission. Proving to ourselves (and others) that we can hack it becomes the focal point of such hops. When you feel yourself falling into this trap, take time out to honestly review your own limitations and expectations about a flight. Can you accomplish all you need to do safely? Take the time to change things before you cruise down the cat so your hop doesn't turn into a nightmare.

Cdr. Toms is an A-6 pilot. He was the CO of VA-115, and is currently assigned to BUPERS as the Aviation Officer Community Manager.





Left to right: LCdr. Keith J. Quigley; Lt. Jeffrey D. Hogan, AW1 Christopher P. Carnes, AW2 Michael J. Mellema

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Lt. Jeffrey D. Hogan
AW1 Christopher P. Carnes
AW2 Michael J. Mellema
HS-7
LCdr. Keith J. Quigley
COMHSWING One

The crew of Dusty Dog 612 arrived at the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center's (AUTEC) range. Lt. Hogan (HAC) directed an operational check of the sonar system. During the initial coupled approach to a sonar hover, they heard a very loud bang as the H-3 passed through 80 feet and 35 knots.

Lt. Hogan saw the No. 1 engine's gas turbine speed decreasing, along with a loss of torque and power turbine speed. The oil pressure was also dropping to zero, and T5 pegged at 1,000 degrees C. He confirmed the loss of the No. 1 engine, perhaps caused by a compressor stall.

As the helicopter decelerated below minimum single-engine airspeed with

rotor rpm dropping toward 92 percent, Lt. Hogan made a single-engine waveoff. LCdr. Quigley added full power to the remaining engine and backed up Lt. Hogan with rotor rpm and airspeed calls. They were able to stabilize the Sea King at 35 feet, 70 knots, and 100 percent rotor rpm. Lt. Hogan then climbed to a safe autorotation altitude, secured the No. 1 engine and reviewed dual-engine loss procedures.

En route to Site 1 at AUTEC, the two pilots also reviewed single-engine landing procedures. Since the aircraft couldn't hover single-engine, and with a confined area at the helo pad as the only available landing site, Lt. Hogan made a single-engine approach and no-hover landing.

Once again, we need to remind readers about how to submit a BZ nomination. Please make sure that the writeup goes through the squadron CO, then to the wing, MAG or admin wing. In the case of helo dets, the ship's CO needs to chop the writeup. The signature of a squadron public affairs officer or safety officer will not suffice.

The nominating squadron should send the writeup, chops and a good 5x7 or 8x10 photograph to the Editor. Color photos are fine, but they will be published in black and white. Avoid polaroids.

Finally, for you folks who actually submit the BZ packages, please make sure that the nominee(s) first name(s) or initials are included, as well as their positions in the crew, e.g. (crew chief) or (SENSO). A contact DSN (AV) number should also be on the cover letter.

1stLt. T.P. Mains III, USMC VMAT-203

First Lieutenant Mains was on his first solo flight in the AV-8B. Only two miles from touchdown on GCA final, he saw a flashing master caution light and HYD 1 caution light. He cross-checked the hydraulic-pressure indicators and verified that HYD 1 pressure was decreasing. He also noticed that all landing gear indications were unsafe.

First Lieutenant Mains declared an emergency and blew his landing gear down with the Harrier's emergency

BRAVO ZULU

pneumatic system. NATOPS calls for a vertical landing if possible, but 1st Lt. Mains quickly determined that his aircraft was too heavy. He opted for a rolling vertical landing near the edge of the airfield's center mat. He landed without his stability augmentation system, which was lost when his hydraulics failed.

The entire incident, from initial failure indications to touchdown, took approximately 60 seconds. With only 15 hours in the AV-8B, 1st Lt. Mains handled this emergency like a seasoned Harrier pilot.—Capt. K.J. Andrews, USMC, NAVSAFECEN AV-8B analyst.



Left to right: 1st Lt. William Edwards, USMC; Capt. Kevin Conroy, USMC; GySgt. Craig Anderson, USMC; LCpl. Christopher Smith, USMC

23



The crew of Oasis 21, a CH-53E, was conducting day CQs and instrument approaches to USS *Wasp* (LHD-1). After flying approximately 1.4 hours and finishing a CCA, they executed a missed approach. The aircraft was in a climbing right turn, passing through 600 feet, when the crew suddenly felt a high-frequency vibration.

Capt. Conroy (HAC) immediately took some power off and leveled at 700 feet. The vibrations persisted but were reduced. First Lieutenant Edwards (copilot) had thoroughly scanned all the instruments but couldn't

find any abnormal indications.

LCpl. Smith (crew chief) reported that the vibrations seemed to come from the vicinity of the tail rotor.

Capt. Conroy decided to make an immediate precautionary landing to the ship. During the approach, he kept power adjustments to the bare minimum to prevent the vibrations from increasing.

Total time from the onset of the vibrations until the helicopter was safe on deck was less than three minutes. An inspection revealed that the disconnect bearing for the tail rotor had failed.

Hot Seat, Cold Water

By Lt. Chris Eagle

24



"Chris, go ahead and get out."

That's how it all started. In the next second I answered one of the questions that had been with me ever since I began flying back in the training command: Will I get out when the time comes? Without giving it a second thought, I was on my way out of our failing Intruder.

After we had a partial hydraulic failure in our A-6, we orbited over the water just off NAS Whidbey at 3,000 feet and set up to land. However, before we could begin our approach, the aircraft's hydraulics failed completely, forcing us to eject.

After pulling the handle, the first thing I recall seeing was the aircraft flying along below me. I brought my head

up and saw my pilot in his seat. I shook off the stars and realized I was in my chute heading for the water. My pilot was in his chute below me. I saw the spot where the plane had hit the water. I then realized that I was on my way to validating my DWEST training.

During initial water survival training, and subsequent refresher training sessions, I always wondered if I would be able to remember all of my IROK procedures. Hanging in my parachute, and staring down at the water brought all of the words back in a hurry. "Inflate" popped into my mind. I repeated it to myself a few times before actually reaching for the beads. Relief immediately came over me as my LPA inflated. A similar sequence left my raft inflated a few feet

below me and now the word "options" was going through my head.

No specific steps came to mind until I felt the cool rush of oxygen in my face and removed my mask. I remembered the rest of my options quickly, including four-line release to stop the oscillations caused by my raft swinging below me. I found my Koch fittings and looked down in time to see the water rushing up at me.

My first concern as my feet hit the 49-degree water was to undo my Kochs. Then I turned my attention to getting into my raft. My first abortive attempt to board, with my seat pan still attached, ended as I stared at my raft, now vertical. Upset with myself for not releasing my seat pan, I backed away from my raft and realized that the water was cold. My anger quickly replaced this feeling when I could not locate the lanyard to attach myself to my raft. I gave up all hope of finding the lanyard and finally managed to flounder into my raft with much less grace than I had displayed in the non-threatening environment of the training tank in Pensacola.

I realized that I was quite cold so I pulled the raft's splash curtain up around me. With our wingman circling overhead, I was very confident that I would shortly be pulled from the water by the SAR helo. After all, we were only six miles from the base and our wingman would be able to provide them an exact location. I decided that I needed to get the water out of the raft in order to warm up a little bit, so oblivious to the fact that every wave washing over the edge of the raft brought more water than I could splash out, I started bailing. My fixation on bailing ended for a moment as our wingman passed overhead once again. I decided that I should try to talk to him on my PRC-90.

I was able to make contact with him and let him know that I was OK, in my raft and very cold. I heard my pilot saying the same thing and asking where the helo was. The wingman told us that the helo had just launched. I sat back in my raft, shivering, and waited to see the helo coming out from the base.

When I saw the helo, I thought of signalling for the first

time. Initially, I thought of getting my strobe light out but I decided that the reflective tape on my helmet would suffice. I splashed some water as the helo approached and he flew directly over me, straight toward my pilot to pick him up. We were both out of the water and en route to the hospital in a matter of minutes.

I had not planned on a 15-minute swim in cold water or participating in a SAREX. However, I learned a lot. I had not considered the flight to be an overwater hop even though both communities based at Whidbey (A-6 and EA-6B) routinely do their troubleshooting over an island six miles from the base. If problems with the jet get ugly enough to warrant ejection, we are in for a cold swim. I now dress a lot warmer for all my local flying. A little sweat in the cockpit never hurts, but hypothermia can kill you.

I used to routinely run through IROK procedures during regular preflights. When I really needed to carry out the steps, though, the actions came a lot slower. The words for the acronym come quickly to mind now.

All the extra gear I had stashed at home to put in my vest was still in the closet where it didn't do me any good when I needed it. You'd better believe it's in my flight gear now.

The last thing I learned is the need to prepare signalling equipment as soon as you get into the water. I had not prepared any signalling devices and if they had been required, I am not sure that after 15 minutes in the water and raft I would have been able to get the devices out of my gear and been able to use them.

A lot of things went wrong that day and a lot of things went right. We were lucky to have a wingman with us through the entire mishap. We were also extremely fortunate that this mishap occurred during the day and within sight of our base. Had we ejected at night or not had the wingman, we would have spent a lot longer in the water, and the outcome might have been entirely different. I now spend a little more time before each flight thinking about ejection and preparing a game plan for each scenario. 

Lt. Eagle was a first-tour BN with VA-145 when he ejected. He is currently assigned to VA-128.

I splashed some water as the helo approached and he flew directly over me, straight toward my pilot to pick him up.



We Almost Had Frozen Turkey for Thanksgiving

By Lt. Bernard V. Shinal

***I**t was Turkey Day 1987* up on the cold and dreary Nanoose ASW range. Dusk was approaching with the ship at anchor and our Seasprite back on deck after a hard day. We had just finished several torpedo drops in support of a CNO eval project and were ready to put the H-2 to bed. Suddenly, one of the sonar techs on board the ship thought he picked up a sniff of a sonar from a Charlie- or Victor-class sub. What was the logical thing to do? Load up some buoys and "launch LAMPS" to try to localize the guy. The HAC and his crew bolted to CIC for a quick brief. As maintenance officer, I took care of loading buoys and refueling. In our haste, we decided not to rehang the two aux fuel tanks.

The H-2 launched from anchor with the OINC and the junior pilot up front and the AW in the back.

The helo was vectored out approximately 20 miles to the range where the datum was thought to be. The helo dropped and linked buoys with no luck. The ship reached its underway time for home and did just that—got underway. The only problem is that the ship never told its helo. This information was not prebriefed in CIC.

The aircraft reached bingo fuel after an hour and 20 minutes of unsuccessful localization. It was dark and the crew decided it was time to go home. When he reached the anchorage where he left the ship, the OINC saw nothing but a pitch black bay. Ours was the only ship left in the area, because the rest of the group departed two days earlier to be home for Thanksgiving. We had gotten the "good deal".

The OINC immediately became concerned because of his low fuel state, the presence of nothing

but icy cold water, 70-foot pine trees, and the fact that the ship's TACAN was down (it was hammered weeks earlier in a storm). He quickly tried to discern from the SENSO in the back whether he could pick up the ship on radar, but with numerous small islands on the screen, everything looked like a contact.

The ship relayed its course but it was quickly becoming too little too late. The OINC knew he had to head south-southeast; ADF confirmed that. The CO called me to CIC. He quickly said, "They said they only have 10 minutes of fuel left. Is that true?" I looked at my watch remembering the takeoff time and said "Ten minutes or less".

With the antisubmarine aircraft controller (ASAC) trying to gain radar contact and the aircraft inbound, the HCO in the tower said he believed he saw the helo and the ASAC passed control to the tower. Tower told the helicopter that they were inbound and to continue on their present course. The aircraft was nine miles away. A couple minutes later people realized that the helo and ship were actually opening on each other. Only after the CO went ballistic did the ASAC start vectoring the helo correctly.

I asked the ship to activate the Grimes light, but no one knew where the switch was. I asked to have them fire a starshell and they said it would take too long. Just then the aircrew asked if the ship had a red light on the stern. "Roger that," the tower said.

The aircrew figured they were home free as they made their final approach. Suddenly, they realized they were making an approach to a merchant ship. Our ship was still about five miles ahead. The stress level in the crew's voices rose dramatically. They

had the ship in sight now but were unsure they had the fuel to make it.

As they got on final for real the junior pilot

blurted out, "Don't change course, don't move, don't do anything! We're on final!" The aircraft landed safely with a minuscule amount of fuel. Some people would say that an H-2 couldn't fly with that little fuel in the tank. H-2s have been known to flame out waiting in the hot-pit line with 100 pounds indicated!

The OINC just climbed out and went straight to his stateroom.

Later, he said all he could think about was how cold the water was and how bad those orders to Adak were going to be. He'd been looking for a place to set the bird down along the islands and the mainland, but the forest goes right to the water in those parts.

The CO called a major powwow of all the players on the ship in CIC the next morning. We hashed out all the sordid details and the lessons we learned. Unfortunately, many detachments learn this lesson the hard way as we did. If you don't have TACAN or are in EMCON Alpha, knowing where homeplate is at all times is critical. It could be a matter of life and death where the water temperature is 40 degrees.

We should constantly educate the surface sailors and officers as to the importance of even the smallest of changes. There are not many det babbas out there who haven't had the ship change pim (predicted intended movement) only to find out an hour later, or have the ship change course when you are on short final without telling you. There is very different thinking onboard many small boys. We must make sure these shipmates realize how crucial the smallest details are for us aviators.

We got our aircraft—her side number was 13—back that night and from then on we called her "Lucky". On this Turkey Day, our bird had almost cooked—or should I say frozen? ◀

Lt. Shinal is the OINC for HSL-37's Det 3.



**"Don't change course, don't move,
don't do anything! We're on final!"**

Where's the Fire?

By Lt. David Lesser



It was a fairly typical mission for a C-2 aircraft in our squadron: fly Pax and packages. The skipper and CMC had some business at the International Airport and I needed flight time.

I was new in the squadron and

AC mentioned that there had "been a gripe written up on that", and I seemed to recall reading something as I thumbed through the innumerable yellow pages in the aircraft's huge VIDS/MAF binder. The plane had only flown an FCF flight since completing an ASPA inspection, and the VIDS/MAF binder was crammed with both signed-off, and outstanding gripes. It seemed as though every system had a gripe or two on it. The AC told me to go ahead and start the left engine while he tried to reset the right generator and called in a couple of AE trouble shooters.

I was monitoring the light-off and spool-up of the left engine when I heard someone shout, "Fire!". I couldn't tell who had shouted, but I heard it so clearly I thought it had come over the ICS. My first assumption was that I had a fire on the engine that was starting up although I had no unusual engine TIT readings, let alone FIRE warning lights. I was

all I cared about was making a good impression on the aircraft commander while I flew the hop from the left seat. The hop was written on the flight schedule as an "A stage" for me so I was pumped up to react to simulated emergencies as I went through the engine-start checklists.

We had started the right engine, but couldn't get the right generator to come on line. The

about to toggle the GRD START switch to the left side, but my plane captain didn't seem aware of any emergency, and kept giving me the startup signal for the left engine. I wasn't about to pull the right fluid-cutoff handle either, until I knew which engine was burning. So, I sat there, left hand upraised ready to hit the GRD START to the left side and deal with an engine-fire-on-start emergency. My right hand was raised toward the right fluid cutoff handle ready to initiate the procedures for engine-fire-on-deck emergency. I looked like Charlton Heston parting the Red Sea in the "Ten Commandments" and I imagined being fried in this position. Well, I could take burning to death, or ending up looking like Freddy Krueger, but not the thought of being FENABed for not following NATOPS procedures to the letter.

All the time I was shouting, "Which engine, where?" into the ICS, but the plane captain and launch crew were still unaware of anything wrong. The AC was talking to ground describing where we were parked, but I didn't hear him mention

**I started
making figure
eights with
my head,
which just got
me dizzy.**

the fire. I thought I should signal the ground crew that we had a fire, but not wanting to remove either hand from the engine panel I started making figure eights with my head, which just got me dizzy. I then made figure eights with each hand like a orchestra conductor.

At this point, the AC reached over and pulled both cutoff handles and told me to get out of the plane. All in all, about 10 seconds had elapsed since I heard the first "fire" call.

As it turned out, neither engine was on fire. A few chafed wires had shorted out, starting an electrical fire under the main circuit breaker panel. One troubleshooter had yelled, "Fire!" loud enough for me to hear it in the cockpit despite my earplugs and helmet. He then ran aft to get a CO₂ extinguisher and returned to put out the blaze in just a few seconds. The second troubleshooter just ran, not even pausing to say "Good afternoon, sir" to our startled skipper

and CMC. They had unbuckled and stood up just as I emerged from the cockpit waving for them to get out. Our skipper was by no means an athlete, but the speed with which a man of his stature managed to sprint was truly amazing. Even more astounding was the sight of the master chief charging ahead of him. The second troubleshooter slowed down at this point to turn around, but seeing his CO and CMC hot on his heels, no doubt miffed by his lack of professional courtesy in leaving a burning airplane without telling them, gave him the impetus to pick up his heels and resume his pace.

The fire was out within seconds, so there was no serious damage. Since then that particular wire bundle has been routed out of harm's way on all C-2 aircraft.

The first troubleshooter got a letter of commendation and became an excellent aircrewman. The second

troubleshooter never got used to his new nickname, "Flash".

I learned a few things worth sharing. Knowing where the fire is and communicating that to the crew is crucial to expeditiously dealing with the emergency. Any action is better than none at all. At the very least, I should have stopped trying to start the left engine. Any plane returning to flight status after a long time as hangar queen deserves special attention for its first couple of flights. A closer preflight inspection may have revealed the chafed wire bundle. When a problem arises, hold the checklist there until it's resolved. It's not worth the time saved if the problem—in our case, the right generator not coming on line—could result in a more serious problem such as an electrical fire. Finally, all aircrew should put passenger safety ahead of their own. Unlike the surface community, we do not have a tradition of the captain going down with his ship.

Lt. David Lesser was assigned to VRC-40. He currently flies with VRC-50. 29



I tried to explain to him why we were obviously on the New York side. While he was looking at his chart, he responded sternly,

"You just fly."

By Lt. Timothy A. Kaseno

30



Crew coordination is supposed to maximize efficiency and reduce an individual's workload by using all crewmembers to accomplish the mission. This concept was lacking on one of my first flights out of the FRS. The flight was a simple cross-country to transfer a SH-3D from Jacksonville, Florida to the Sikorsky Plant at Stratford, Connecticut, with an overnight stay in Washington, D.C.

The flight started out uneventfully as we anticipated enjoying a couple of nights exploring new areas. We started having occasional problems with our TACAN. We were filed IFR but the weather was VMC and unrestricted so we weren't too concerned. Besides, the problem was very intermittent and we were only unable to receive certain stations.

During those legs we were

able to stay on our route by using a VFR sectional. We arrived at D.C. with no more problems and enjoyed the rest of the evening.

The next day we decided to do a little sightseeing since the leg to Stratford would be relatively short, only a couple of hours. While in the terminal that afternoon, the HAC told me to watch the gear while he got a weather brief. He came back and said that the weather was marginal, but should not be a problem. (Remember our TACAN still hadn't been fixed). While filing, it became evident that he was a little rusty at his IFR procedures. Then we launched.

At first everything was fine. However, the problems with our TACAN seemed to get worse. Shortly into the flight it was only occasionally picking up any stations and since conditions were now IFR, we were depending on radar vectors to stay on our route.

Since those vectors were coming from New York Approach, we were obviously adding a burden to the already busy air traffic controllers. My HAC continued to tell them that we were only having minor problems and requested vectors until we could pick up our next TACAN station, which we never did! We were filed for a TACAN approach which we were obviously not going to be able to shoot without a working TACAN. Since I was not at the controls I decided it would be a good idea to start looking for a GCA approach in the area. At this point the HAC asked what I was doing. When I told him, he said not to worry about it and that I was only going to "alarm the crew for no reason."

A short while later, approach asked us what our intentions were. The HAC replied "as filed," which of course was a TACAN approach. Now we were getting radar vectors to the initial for an approach. After ATC continued to question us if we were receiving the TACAN signal long after we should have, he finally admitted to them that our TACAN was hard down. In frustration, the controller asked what we were going to do. After saying, "stand by," the HAC gave me the controls and decided to start looking for an approach that we could shoot, something he had told me not to do an hour earlier.

He made a short, frantic

search through the pubs and charts, and turned down the ILS that ATC suggested (since we weren't ILS equipped). The pilot finally asked for vectors for a descent to VMC over Long Island Sound. ATC complied but said that they would only be able to get us to the MDA. After

Our crew chief was digging his fingers into our seatbacks out of concern and frustration.

cheating slightly we managed to catch a glimpse of whitecaps. We canceled IFR, which ATC gladly did to get us out of their hair, and descended to maintain VMC. The ceiling was between 300 and 400 feet and we had to stay at about 300 feet to maintain VMC. I quickly broke out the VFR chart as we headed south toward one of the coasts and started to determine where we were from the coastline features. After turning west to follow the coastline, the HAC said he hoped that it was the Connecticut side of Long

Island Sound. I told him that we were obviously on the New York side since we were heading west over Long Island Sound with land to our left. He said, "We don't know that!" He gave me the controls and took the charts. Once again, I tried to explain to him why we were obviously on the New York side while he was looking at the chart. He responded sternly, "You just fly!"

Well, after a series of blunders such as accepting an ILS approach and climbing back to IMC, we eventually found ourselves IMC at night with a 500-foot ceiling. Our fuel was now becoming a factor and we were beginning to get some snow buildup. We were concerned the snow might turn to ice, and our crew chief was digging his fingers into our seatbacks out of concern and frustration. Finally, after getting an ADF/NDB approach, which my HAC wasn't sure how to shoot, we broke out and landed with low fuel lights glowing.

Use your crew and copilot. Listen to what they have to say even if they are much less experienced. If you're the copilot, listen to the HAC but don't count solely on his wisdom. Just because he's a HAC doesn't necessarily mean that he is wise. Also, plan ahead, always consider your options, and let people who are in a position to help know what problems you are having. Don't ever "just fly". ◀

LETTERS



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Re: Editorial (July '91)

NAS Kingsville, Texas — As a former VAQ-33 navigator, I couldn't let this one slide. Pilots have the lead; navigators don't. I was surprised to read this article in *Approach*, especially since it was written by a Whale navigator. This misconception is exactly what caused the mishap south of Elmendorf AFB in November 1987.

The navigator passed the lead to the other navigator. The pilots were too busy (or had not selected ICS or the proper radio) to notice what had happened. The A-3s got together because both pilots were flying lead.

You should find a way to make this point clear to young NFOs who read *Approach* before they develop bad habits.

Lt. M.J. Zollick
Assistant Air Operations Officer

Re: "Riding the Rocket Chair" (August '91)

NWC China Lake — I noticed a few discrepancies regarding the condition and performance of the author's parachute. He said he did not use the four-line release because it would have increased his rate of descent. Using the four-line release reduces oscillation and rate of vertical descent, improves horizontal velocity and stability, and lets you maneuver better.

The author also said that he thought his decision had been a good one because a line-over had ripped holes in his chute's canopy. Actually, the engineering investigators discovered that the damage to the canopy was not critical and that he could have used the four-line release if he had ejected during a daytime hop. Since the ejection occurred at night, the BN's decision not to use the release

system was good because the system is not recommended at night.

Bruce W. Trenholm
Mishap Investigator
Parachute Engineering Division

● The four-line release system increases forward velocity to 3-4 knots, providing more directional control. While NATOPS does not recommend using the four-line release at night, the Norfolk APTU teaches its students that using the four-line release is *not* an option at night.

See "Why Aren't We Flying?" (October '91) for a story of a night ejection where the pilot's canopy is damaged by the seat after separation.—Ed.

Re: "Under the Weather" (March '91)

NAS Patuxent River, Md. — This article needs clarification. The author says, "Thunderstorms were in the forecast, but the line extended farther south than predicted. Hail was never included in the brief."

The DD 175-1 Flight Weather Briefing form states in bold print that hail, severe turbulence, lightning and wind shear can be expected in and near thunderstorms. Every time forecasters warn about thunderstorms, all of these hazards are implied. It is vitally important that pilots understand this basic terminology so that they can prepare for the weather that is predicted for their flight.

AGC Linda Small
NOCD

Kudo From a Bubba

NAS Whiting Field, Fla. — Thanks for your editorial in the October issue on "helobubbas." It really ain't that easy flying H-2s in IMC close to the water at night. I appreciate your view. Great work!

Lt. Tom Pedersen
VT-3

FT AGL

21. THUNDERSTORMS

MWA / WV NO.

NONE	AREA	LINE
ISOLATED 1 - 2%		
FEW 3 - 15%		
SCATTERED 16 - 45%		
NUMEROUS - MORE THAN 45%		
HAIL, SEVERE TURBULENCE & ICING, HEAVY PRECIPITATION, LIGHTNING & WIND SHEAR EXPECTED IN AND NEAR THUNDERSTORMS.		

LOCATION

25. AIRDROME

FEST / AI TN

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XO

**No matter where you begin, a
thorough preflight could make
the difference between flying
and swimming.**



Ltjg. John Gormley

Poster idea contributed by John W. Williams

